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RECENT THEOLOGICAL LITERATURE

BABYLONIAN RELIGIOUS TEXTS

In Volume X of the Publications of the University Museum¹ (University of Pennsylvania) Dr. Langdon has edited a number of most interesting and important religious texts selected from the rich treasures of the Philadelphia museum. In Part I (1915) appeared a somewhat lengthy discussion of an old Babylonian (Sumerian) work which Langdon called the "Sumerian Epic of Paradise, the Flood and the Fall of Man." Had the title contained fewer words associated in our minds with the early chapters of Genesis this fragment of Sumerian literature would have received far less attention than was otherwise the case. The curious will find the literature of the controversy which arose over this text and the title Langdon gave it in an article by Professor Barton in this *Journal* (XXI, 571 f.).² Into the technical matters involved we cannot enter here. In view of the many obscurities of the text, the reviewer believes that the choice of title was unfortunate, to say the least. It seems certain that the text was part of a larger work in which there were arranged in "epical" fashion a series of myths and folk tales concerning the beginnings of the world and the human race. Such myths and tales have arisen in every corner of the world. Whether some of the biblical stories and their Babylonian originals go back to this collection of Sumerian tales cannot be determined so long as the meaning of so many passages in the portion of the work preserved eludes our grasp.³

¹ *Epical and Liturgical Texts*. By Stephen Langdon. Philadelphia: The University Museum, 1915-17. 227 pages and 70 plates.

² See pp. 576 f.; also Langdon in *AJSL*, XXXIII (1917), 245-49, and the *Expository Times*, XXIX (1918), 218 f.

³ Professor Jastrow, with his intimate knowledge of the religious literature of the Sumerians and Babylonians, has cleared up many a passage which remained obscure to Langdon (see *AJSL*, XXXIII [1917], 91-144). But I fail to follow him in his translation of what he calls "perhaps the most interesting episode of the tablet" (ll. 20-32 f., col. 2). The sign which he reads *maš* = *lalu*, on which his whole interpretation of this section depends, is clearly the *gi*-sign, as a reference to the immediately preceding lines (20 and 22) will show. For the form of the *maš*-sign in the early texts, see Ranke, *BE*, VI, Sign-list, No. 24, and Myhrman, *BE*, III¹, Sign-list, No. 37. Of the first sign in l. 25 Jastrow says that it "is again *uš* as in ll. 24 and 26. Correct Langdon's text accordingly." But neither the photograph of the text nor the original, which I examined carefully, bears out this somewhat dogmatic assertion. There is doubt as to the sign. Again in l. 24 Jastrow would "read *dirig* = *malá*." But where was the *dirig*-sign ever made like this?

The texts contained in Part II (1917) are of the greatest importance because of their bearing upon the much-discussed question of the deification of early Babylonian kings. Whether Langdon's translations of the liturgical hymns to Ur-Engur, Dungi, and the other kings of the dynasty of Ur are accepted as final or not, there are enough passages in these hymns about whose meaning there can be no doubt to make it evident to the unbiased reader that the honors bestowed upon the rulers of this dynasty were such as gods, not men, receive. It is interesting to note that the late Babylonian theologians had the name of Bur-Sin, another king of Ur, in their lists of gods.

The last part (III) contains the text of "the South Babylonian version of the second book of the epic *ša nagba imuru*, 'He who has seen all things,' commonly referred to as the Epic of Gilgamesh."

Dr. Langdon deserves the gratitude of all Assyriologists and other students of the Babylonian religion for his industry in making accessible these interesting but very difficult texts. The reviewer hates to look for the fly in the ointment, but he cannot refrain from calling attention to the many evidences of hasty editing found in this volume. To mention a few examples: On pages 112 f. the numbering of the lines in the translation does not conform to the numbering of the lines in the autographed text, Plate VII. In the transliteration of the same text (p. 114, l. 9) we find *pa-è*, but the text shows only the *è*. The English of the translations is frequently as obscure as the Sumerian original. But in spite of these defects the volume is an important contribution to our knowledge of the religion of the early inhabitants of the Babylonian valley.

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THE HEBREW PROPHETS

Professor Gordon is already favorably known by his book on the *Poets of the Old Testament*. He now gives us a companion volume on the prophets.¹ The purpose of the author is to present the prophets "in the clear light of history as the great figures of the ancient Revelation, the men through whose word and influence the vision broadened toward the perfect day." After an introductory chapter on the dawn of prophecy the great figures of Hebrew religion are taken up in succession,

¹ *The Prophets of the Old Testament*. By Alex. R. Gordon. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1916. 364 pages. 6s.